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PAGE 001

TOR: 201206Z OCT 88

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EXDIS KHYBER

FOR STATE - ARMACOST, DOD/ISA - ARMITAGE, NSC -
 NEGROPONTE AND CIA - KERR FROM FROM OAKLEY

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PREL, MOPS, AF, PK
 SUBJECT: FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE SEIGE OF KABUL

REF: ISLAMABAD 22623

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT

2. I HAVE A FEW THOUGHTS TO ADD TO PREVIOUS
 COMMENTS FOR PURPOSES OF CLARITY AND EMPHASIS.

3. FIRST, ISI AND THE MUJAHIDIN ARE NOT OUT TO
 HAMMER THE SOVIETS. THEY WANT THEM TO LEAVE AND THE
 SOONER THE BETTER. THEY HAVE LEFT A WAY OUT FOR THE

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SECRET

STATE

88 0675025

SSO

PAGE 002
TOR: 201206Z OCT 88NC 0675025
ISLAMA 22701

SOVIETS WHICH IS NORTH ALONG THE SALANG ROAD. ONE PURPOSE OF THE KABUL SIEGE IS TO PUT ENOUGH MUJAHIDIN FORCES INTO POSITION AROUND KABUL SO AS TO BE READY TO MOVE FAST ONCE THE SOVIETS HAVE COMPLETED THEIR WITHDRAWAL, PRESUMABLY IN FEBRUARY, AS WELL AS TO APPLY MAXIMUM PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE DURING THE INTERIM. THE SIEGE IS DESIGNED TO MAKE THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE DEPARTURE OF THE SOVIETS AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE REGIME AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE.

4. THE MUJAHIDIN ARE ALSO DETERMINED NOT TO GIVE UP THEIR POSITIONS AROUND KABUL BECAUSE OF THE APPROACHING WINTER SEASON, ONLY TO HAVE TO RETAKE THEM NEXT SPRING WITH ATTENDANT CASUALTIES AS WAS THE CASE THIS YEAR. THEY ARE GOING TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE AGAINST THE REGIME DURING THE WINTER MONTHS. WE SHOULD ALSO KEEP IN MIND THAT THE USG HAS LONG HAD A POLICY, WHICH WE HAVE PUSHED WITH THE GOP AND THE RESISTANCE, OF ENCOURAGING THE MUJAHIDIN TO WORK TOGETHER. THE REASONABLY UNIFIED KABUL COMMAND REFLECTS THIS. IT WILL RESULT IN A MORE COORDINATED AND LESS DANGEROUS APPROACH RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL ATTACKS. THE LATTER WOULD CAUSE MORE CASUALTIES, INNOCENT AND COMBATANT, ON BOTH SIDES AND COULD EVEN PROVOKE ATTEMPTED UPRISINGS (AND SUBSEQUENT BLOODBATH) INSIDE KABUL.

5. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, THE BUILDUP OF THE CURRENT STRATEGY AND DISPOSITIONS HAS BEEN A GRADUAL ONE, WITH THE FINISHING TOUCHES PUT ON IT AT A MEETING A FEW WEEKS AGO. IF WE TRIED TO TURN IT OFF, THERE WOULD BE MAJOR AND NO DOUBT PUBLIC CONFRONTATIONS WITH AND BETWEEN THE GOP, THE ALLIANCE AND THE COMMANDERS. THE RESISTANCE IS ALREADY SUSPICIOUS THAT GOP SUPPORT IS FALTERING SINCE THE MFA FAILED TO CONSULT THEM ON AGREEING WITH THE SOVIETS ON A CONSENSUS UNGA RESOLUTION ON AFGHANISTAN. THIS IS THE WRONG TIME TO UPSET WHATEVER COHESION HAS BEEN ACHIEVED.

6. ANOTHER MUJAHIDIN CONSIDERATION IS TO HARRASS

SECRET

SECRET

STATE

88 0675025

SSO

PAGE 003

TOR: 201206Z OCT 88

NC 0675025

ISLAMA 22701

AND PERIODICALLY CLOSE AIRFIELDS AT KABUL, BAGRAM AND SHINDAND, AS THEY HAVE DONE AT KANDAHAR. THE MUJAHIDIN HAVE BEEN SORELY BATTERED BY GROUND ATTACK AIRCRAFT LATELY AND THEY ARE DEVELOPING A STRATEGY AND THE MEANS TO TRY TO REDUCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE AIR ATTACKS. OBVIOUSLY, IF THE SOVIETS WERE TO REMOVE THEIR AIRCRAFT FROM THESE AIRFIELDS OR TO STAND DOWN FROM ATTACKS AGAINST THE MUJAHIDIN, THEIR RESISTANCE RESPONSE MIGHT BE DIFFERENT. IT IS UNREALISTIC, HOWEVER, TO EXPECT THE SOVIETS TO SEE IT IN THIS LIGHT.

7. THE BASIC PROBLEM REMAINS THAT THE SOVIETS CONTINUE TO INSIST ON POWER SHARING BETWEEN THE POPA AND THE MUJAHIDIN RATHER THAN THE PDPA GIVING UP POWER. YAQUB TRIED TO MAKE THIS POINT TO VORONTSOV IN AUGUST IN MOSCOW BUT WAS REBUFFED. YOU TOOK THE SAME APPROACH IN YOUR SEPTEMBER 1-2 DISCUSSIONS IN MOSCOW AS DID THE SECRETARY AND YAQUB KHAN AGAIN IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS. WE HAVE MADE THE SAME POINT TO ARMAND HAMMER AND BENON SEVAN. THUS FAR, THE SOVIETS HAVE REFUSED TO FACE UP TO THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN. SO LONG AS THEY CONTINUE TO INSIST ON A FORMAL ROLE FOR THE PDPA PER SE (RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL "GOOD MUSLIMS") AND REFUSE TO TALK TO THE ALLIANCE, EVEN ABOUT POW'S, THE MUJAHIDIN WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS HARD MILITARILY FOR A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION.

8. THE PAKISTANIS HAVE IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS
SECRET SECTION 02 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 22701

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SECRET

SECRET

STATE

88 0675025

SSO

PAGE 004
TOR: 201206Z OCT 89NC 0675025
ISLAMA 22701

MADE SERIOUS EFFORTS TO HELP INITIATE A SOVIET-ALLIANCE DIALOGUE ON POW'S AS IN THE PROPOSAL YAKUB SHARED WITH US AND PRESENTED TO SHEVARDNADZE. THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT RESPONDED POSITIVELY OR WITH CONCRETE STEPS. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TOLD US TODAY, OCTOBER 20 THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HERE, AFTER THE APPOINTMENT OF VORONTSOV, INDICATED THAT ANY SOVIET-ALLIANCE CONTACTS ON POW'S SHOULD BE PUT ON THE BACKBURNER. WHAT SEVAN HAS TOLD US ABOUT HIS TALKS IN KABUL, AND FROM WHAT KABUL HAS REPORTED OF YESTERDAY'S PDPA CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING IS AS NEGATIVE AS EVER.

9. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION TO INDICATE THAT THE GOP OR THE MUJAHIDIN INTEND TO SLOW DOWN OR REVERSE THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL. WHEN I SAW HAMID GUL THIS PAST WEEKEND WITH VISITING SENIOR OFFICIALS, HE SPECIFICALLY ASKED THAT THE PLANS FOR THE KABUL SIEGE BE DISCREETLY PASSED ALONG TO THE SOVIETS SO THAT NO MISUNDERSTANDING DEVELOPS. WE HAVE RECOMMENDED THIS AND BELIEVE IT IS FULLY CONSISTENT WITH ARMACOST'S CONVERSATION LAST SEPTEMBER WITH SHEVARDNADZE IN WHICH THE LATTER WAS URGED TO MODIFY BASIC SOVIET POLICIES OR RECOGNIZE THAT THEIR POSITION IN AFGHANISTAN WOULD SUFFER.

10. BY NOW, THE SOVIETS MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT MUJAHIDIN STRATEGY AND TACTICS ARE, INCLUDING THEIR ABILITY TO ROCKET AND CLOSE AIRPORTS AND ROADS ALMOST AT WILL. IN ADDITION TO LONG RANGE WEAPONS USED BY BOTH SIDES, THERE ARE DAILY AMBUSHES, COUNTER-AMBUSHES AND SKIRMISHES AT NIGHT AROUND KABUL. SOVIET UNITS, PRIMARILY SPETNAZ, ARE ATTEMPTING TO PREVENT MUJAHIDIN INFILTRATION OF THE CITY OR TO LOCATE AND DESTROY RESISTANCE POSITIONS OR DEPOTS. THIS IS RESULTING IN A STEADY TOLL OF SOVIET CASUALTIES. MEANWHILE, RESISTANCE SABOTAGE OPERATIONS AROUND THE CITY ARE STEADILY INCREASING. ONLY THE SOVIETS CAN PREVENT THE KABUL SEIGE -- BY FINALLY RESPONDING TO THE REAL SITUATION, NOT THEIR IMAGINED ONE.

SECRET

SECRET

STATE

38 0675025

SSO

PAGE 005

NC 0675025

TOR: 201206Z OCT 88

ISLAMA 22701

11. THE SIEGE OF KABUL MAY NOT PLAY OUT PRECISELY
THE WAY WE HAVE LAID IT OUT, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT THE
PRESSURE IS GOING TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY STEPPED UP,
AND THE SECURITY OF OUR MISSION, AS WELL AS THOSE OF
OTHER FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS, COULD BE ADVERSELY
AFFECTED. OAKLEY

END OF MESSAGE

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